

## Abstracts and Biographies

Publicness beyond the public sphere:  
Alternative publications and counter-publics in 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century China

June 21-22, 2018

Thursday June 21

### **Panel 1: Publicness and the Market**

#### **Defamation, Litigation and Strategic Publicity in the 1920s Tabloid Press**

Jing Zhang, EHES

In the Republican era, the law of defamation 妨害名譽 acknowledged people's rights to reputation and provided a new legal instrument to protect individuals, social groups and institutions. Media coverage of various lawsuits spread the idea of reputational right but also altered the meaning and effect of defamation litigations. This paper sheds light on the complicated relationships between the media and legal practice in the late 1920s by examining the Shanghai tabloid press's integration of defamation litigation into its process of publicity for profit. The paper starts by analyzing the changing attitudes of the press towards defamation law. If the major dailies resisted the defamation law as a tool of media control in the 1910s, both the serious and tabloid press displayed more tolerant or even welcome attitudes in the 1920s. I argue that the profit-driven tabloid papers' discovery of the publicity function of defamation litigations played a large part in this change. A case study on the lawsuit in 1928, filed by the celebrated couple Xu Zhimo 徐志摩 and Lu Xiaoman 陸小曼 against a tabloid paper the *Holmes* 福爾摩斯 for alluding to Lu's affair with another man, demonstrates how the tabloid paper strategically utilized the trial to validate, reinforce and market newsworthy facts. Unlike previous studies on the defamation laws which usually analyze the negotiations between reputational rights and the freedom of expression, I read the legal procedure both as an extra layer of text that the popular media woven into their serial reports and a mechanism for piquing public curiosity and producing marketable stories.

**Jing Zhang** recently graduated from the Department of East Asian Languages and Culture Columbia University and joined EHES as a postdoctoral researcher for the project "Alternative Public Spheres in 20th century China" in 2018. Her research interest lies in Chinese urban society, communication history, legal history, popular culture of East Asian countries. She is working on the early Republican, in particular the warlord period (1916-1928), popular political engagement through the channels of gossip and rumor about political leaders and various state coping strategies in a highly commercialized urban context.

## **“Common Knowledge” (*Changshi*) and Domestic Innovation: An Early Twentieth Century Chinese Counter-Public in an Emerging Era of Global IPR**

Eugenia Lean, Columbia University

By examining the 1917-1927 newspaper column “Common Knowledge for the Household” (*Jiating changshi*), this paper investigates how editor and industrialist Chen Diexian promoted an array of information, including industrial and manufacturing knowledge, as “common knowledge” (*changshi*) suitable for the modern Chinese household. Featured in a literary supplement in Shanghai’s largest daily, *Shenbao*, the content of the column was eclectic and included tips on chemistry, manufacturing, and medicine alongside folk knowledge and materia medica information. Yet, entries related to *xiao gongyi*, “the minor industrial arts,” stood out and notably included manufacturing recipes and formulas of *brand* products, both domestic and foreign. Not something innately embodied, nor exclusive to the domain of professionals, *changshi* was to be acquired by non-specialist readers who consumed Chen’s newspaper columns. By making manufacturing processes “common,” this column was staking a claim of transparency and promoting collaborative ways of owning knowledge. It did so to distinguish itself from “traditional” merchants who hoarded family manufacturing secrets. In a period when a regime of IPR was emerging worldwide, the column also helped constitute a counter-public that shared knowledge and recipes openly, defying emerging global IP ideas that promoted exclusive corporate ownership over manufacturing methods and brand formulas.

**Eugenia Lean** is the Director of the Weatherhead East Asian Institute and Associate Professor of Chinese history in the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures at Columbia University. She is the author of *Public Passions: the Trial of Shi Jianqiao and the Rise of Popular Sympathy in Republican China* (UC Press, 2007), which was awarded the 2007 John K. Fairbank prize by the American Historical Association. Professor Lean is currently completing the book project, *Manufacturing China’s Vernacular Industrialism: Nativist Tinkerer and Toothpowder Magnate, Chen Diexian (1879-1940)*, which examines the practices and writings of maverick figure Chen Diexian, a professional writer/editor, science enthusiast, and pharmaceutical industrialist. She was on-leave for 2017-2018 at the Institute for Advanced Studies and on a National Endowment of the Humanities fellowship.

## **Cinema as a Tool for the Diffusion of Ideas in the 1930’s: Ambitions and Limits of “Speeches in Images”**

Anne Kerlan, CNRS

In republican China, cinema was seen as a tool for educating the masses and circulating ideas and opinion about the society, in particular by the cultivated elite. Films were often subject to intense debates in magazine and newspapers. This paper will explore the development of this “public space through images” in the early 1930’s, but will also examine the limits of it. How well fitted for public debate is a film, a “speech in images”? Did people, in the audience, really conceive cinema as a tool for diffusion of ideas and not just as a pleasant entertainment? The

study of a few films produced by the Lianhua film company, a company that advertised films as tools for the modernization of the nation, will bring some elements of answer.

Anne Kerlan is “directrice de recherche” at the Centre d’études sur la Chine moderne et contemporaine, UMR Chine-Corée-Japon (EHESS-CNRS) and director of the Centre Chine. She has developed her research in the field of the history of Chinese cinema and Chinese visual culture. Among her latest publications: « Lian`ai yu yiwu (Love and Duty) (1931) », in Stephen Neale (ed.), *Silent Features*, The University of Chicago Press, 2018; *Hollywood à Shanghai. L’épopée des studios de la Lianhua, 1930-1948*, Rennes, PUR, 2015.

## **Contentious Images and Picture(d) Powers—New (Wo)Men in the long 20th Century**

Barbara Mittler, Heidelberg

Contemporary entertainment magazines in China are quite explicitly and openly sexed. Intimacy and touch play an important role in their visual make-up. This paper discusses the politics of “respectable touch.” In thinking about the publicness of the emotions and the sensual, I ask: To what extent can different ideas of intimacy be played out visually and thus experienced by audiences reading China’s vernacular media? When do these images become contentious and why? How do the print media, in advertising, caricature, photography, instigate new understandings of intimacy and touch? How do these factors contribute to shaping, the imag(in)ing of specific (acceptable) forms of intimate activity and thus, gender relations? In other words: how powerful are these images? By creating visual mindmaps, I argue, it is possible to spot the gradations in the normalization of social change: when and where does it become “commonly accepted” (and no longer controversial) to show (and make visible, “(re-)spectable” in public) a photograph of a woman (almost) in the nude or of a hugging and kissing couple? What does this mean for the general level of prudishness or openness and the respectability public displays of affection between the sexes?

The paper seeks to unveil, decode, and critically interrogate the deeply rooted and, I will argue, often contentious meanings that intimacy and touch have acquired in (post)modern China. If social revolutions are always also sensory revolutions, I contend that women’s and men’s sexual liberation, the shifting limits and borders to intimacy and touch and their public display is one in a series of revolutions that have shaped the contours of what (post)modern China is today. I probe the specific roles and expressions of (intimate) touch and how this reflects or challenges existing public order(s). I take contentions over depicting men and women in intimate relations as one example to illustrate the difficulty of drawing a clear line between what is public and what must remain private, deliberating idealized visions of “rationality” vs. discourses over senses and emotions as “uncivil” discourse. I argue that images are crucial to the formation of cultural imaginaries and they are an important element in the making of cultural realities as well.

**Barbara Mittler** is Director of the Heidelberg Centre for Transcultural Studies (formerly the Cluster of Excellence “Asia and Europe in a Global Context.”), and of the Institute of Chinese Studies. She began her studies of Sinology at the University of Oxford (MA Oxon 1990), and has

spent research periods in Taiwan (Academia Sinica), the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, at Harvard and Stanford. Her research focuses on cultural production in (greater) China covering a wide range of topics from music to (visual) and (historical) print media in China's long modernity.

## **Panel 2: Transnational Publics in Colonial and Post-Colonial Settings**

### **A Network that Created the Public: journals and newspapers by native Taiwanese during the Japanese colonial period, 1920-1937**

Shichi Mike Lan, National Chengchi University, TAIWAN

*Tai Oan Chheng Lian* (or *Taiwan Youth*), founded in July 1920 in Tokyo, was the first and longest-running journal published by the native Taiwanese during the fifty-year Japanese rule in Taiwan (1895-1945). This journal and its successors (published as a daily newspaper in Taiwan between 1932 and 1937) were widely considered as playing a critical role in disseminating modern political thought and promoting political and social reform in colonial Taiwan. While earlier scholarly works have paid attention mostly to the content of the journal and study the native Taiwanese publications as political history and/or history of thought, this paper will focus on the organization of the journal and study it as social history.

This paper delineates and examines three social networks of personnel that helped to create and sustain *Taiwan Youth* (and its successors) during its early stage, from its inauguration in 1920 to its “corporatization” in 1923. First, this paper examines the “financial network” by tracing the journal’s fund providers and financial supporters. Secondly, this paper focuses on the “management network” by examining the editorial staff of the journal, Lin Cheng-lu 林呈祿, Cai Pei-huo 蔡培火, Peng Hua-ying 彭華英. Thirdly, this paper traces the “authors’ network” by identifying those Japanese contributors of articles to the journal during its earlier stage, from its inaugural issue (July 1920) to the 4<sup>th</sup> volume in 1922.

This paper finds, each of these networks consisted of Taiwanese and Japanese elites who came from rather diverse, if not opposite, ideological (and religious) standpoints and often came into conflict with one another over economic and political interest. However, they found a common ground—at this historical juncture—in promoting the “publicness” in colonial Taiwan and making the journal possible.

**Shi-chi Mike Lan** (*Ph.D.*, Chicago) is Associate Professor at the Department of History, National Chengchi University, Taiwan. Prior to teaching in Taiwan, he taught at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, and University of Tokyo, Japan. His research interests include Modern East Asian History, empire and nation, the Second World War, and historical memory. His recent publications include “‘Crime’ of Interpreting: Taiwanese Interpreters as War Criminals of World War II”, in Kayoko Takeda and Jesús Baigorri, eds., *New Insights in the History of Interpreting* (2016), “(Re-)Writing History of the Second World War: Forgetting and Remembering the Taiwanese-native Japanese Soldiers in Postwar Taiwan”, *Positions: Asia Critique*, Vol.21, No.4 (Fall 2013).

## **Loyalist, Dissenter, and Cosmopolite: The Cultural Origins of a Counter Public Sphere in Colonial Hong Kong**

Edmund Cheng, Hong Kong Baptist University

This paper surveys the process of discursive contestation by intellectual agents in Hong Kong's late colonial era that fostered a counter public sphere in China's offshore. In the post-war era, Chinese exiled intellectuals leveraged the colony's geopolitical ambiguity and imagined a displaced community of loyalist/dissenter to support independent publishing venues and engage in the cultural front. By the 1970s, home-grown/left-wing intellectuals constructed a hybrid identity to articulate their physical proximity yet social distance towards the Chinese nation-state and appropriate their sense of belonging to the city-state. Through examining the periodicals and interviewing public intellectuals, I propose that this counter public sphere is defined, firstly, by its alternative voice that contests various official discourses, secondly, by its multifaceted inclusiveness that accommodates diverse worldviews and subjectivities, and thirdly, by its critical theatre that nurtures socio-political activism in undemocratic Chinese societies. While the interplay between the political forces permitted the creation of this counter public sphere, I argue that its penetration and resilience were shaped by the intellectual agencies' efforts to stimulate open debates, mediate public behaviors, and practice democratic struggles that gave concrete meaning to citizenship. Habermas' idealized public sphere framework is revisited by bringing ideational contention and cultural identity back in.

**Edmund W. Cheng** is Assistant Professor in the Department of Government and International Studies and Deputy Director of the Centre for Comparative Governance and Policy Research at Hong Kong Baptist University. His research interests include authoritarian politics, contentious politics, political trust, public sphere and urban governance with a focus on China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Malaysia. He has recently published in *China Quarterly*, *Development and Change*, *Political Studies*, *Social Movement Studies*, and co-edited *An Epoch of Social Movements* (Chinese University Press, 2018) and *The Umbrella Movement: Civil Resistance and Contentious Space in Hong Kong* (Amsterdam University Press, forthcoming). He received his PhD from the London School of Economics in 2015 and the Gordon White Prize for the most original article published in *The China Quarterly* in 2016. He is currently leading the implementation of the World Values Survey Wave 7 in Hong Kong.

Friday, June 22

**Keynote address: Craig Calhoun, “The Public Sphere in Crisis?”**

**Craig Calhoun** is University Professor of Social Sciences at Arizona State University. Previously, he was Director of the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), President of the Berggruen Institute, and President of the Social Science Research Council. He taught at the University of North Carolina, Columbia University, and New York University where he founded the Institute for Public Knowledge. Mr. Calhoun’s publications address politics, economics, the impact of technology, and social change. His books include: *Neither Gods Nor Emperors: Students and the Struggle for Democracy in China*, *Nations Matter*, *The Roots of Radicalism*, and *Does Capitalism Have a Future?* Mr. Calhoun studied social anthropology at USC, Columbia and Manchester and has a DPhil in politics, sociology and modern social and economic history from Oxford.

Chair and discussant:

**Gisèle Sapiro** is Professor of Sociology at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales and Research director at the CNRS (Centre européen de sociologie et de science politique), member of Academia Europaea. Her interests include the sociology of intellectuals, literature, censorship, translations, as well as the history and epistemology of the Social Sciences and the Humanities. The author of *La Guerre des écrivains, 1940-1953* (1999; English trans.: *French Writers’ War*, 2014), *La Responsabilité de l’écrivain* (2011), *La Sociologie de la littérature* (2014 ; Spanish transl. 2016 ; *Japanese* 2017), *Los Intelectuales : profesionalización, politización, internacionalización* (2017), *Les Ecrivains et la politique en France* (in press), she has published numerous articles. She has also (co)edited *Pour une histoire des sciences sociales* (2004), *Pierre Bourdieu, sociologue* (2004), *Translatio. Le marché de la traduction en France à l’heure de la mondialisation* (2008), *Les Contradictions de la globalisation éditoriale* (2009), *L’Espace intellectuel en Europe* (2009), *Traduire la littérature et les sciences humaines* (2012), *Sciences humaines en traduction* (2014, online), *Profession ? Ecrivain* (2017).

**Panel 3: Public Sociability**

**The Public Sociability of Millennials in Cyberspace: A Case Study of Barrage Subtitling in bilibili**

Seio Nakajima, Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies, Waseda University

This presentation analyzes the “barrage subtitling” (*danmu*) practice in the Chinese popular video sharing site bilibili. Barrage subtitles are subtitling system originated in the Japanese video sharing site Nico Nico Douga, in which viewers’ comments appear directly on-screen instead of at the margins. They differ from ordinary subtitling, which is usually well-prepared in advance for the purpose of precisely translating the contents of videos—whether a film, TV program, or a music video. Because barrage subtitles are often comments and reactions to what is being played, they allow more spontaneous interactions—sociability (Georg Simmel)—among the viewers. In the communicative practice of barrage subtitling, the purpose of interaction is not solely the

conveyance of substantive meanings, but the continuation and proliferation of communication. In relation to the concept of publicness, the barrage subtitling presents an interesting case of “alternative publications” as it defies “rationality” assumption of the exiting “public sphere” framework with its emphasis on playfulness, as well as it blurs the line between public and private due to its particular platform such as the “pseudo-synchronicity,” which enhances the sense of private intimacy while the communication is fully “public” (viewable even by non-registered users of bilibili). From a more comparative angle, I argue that the practices of barrage subtitling both in China’s bilibili and Japan’s Nico Nico may represent the modal communication strategy of the Millennials in East Asian cyberspace. At the same time, the particular norms that guide the sociability—including the rules for participating in the barrage subtitling as well as concrete practices—differ significantly between the two societies; hence the necessity of a transnational comparative study. As a preliminary step toward a fully comparative analysis, this presentation focuses more on the case of bilibili, and uses the case of Nico Nico as a supplementary point of reference.

**Seio Nakajima** is Associate Professor and Associate Dean at the Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies, Waseda University. He has conducted organizational analyses of the Chinese film industry, as well as ethnographies of Chinese film audiences and consumption. He is currently working on a book manuscript, tentatively entitled *Dream Factory, Chinese Style: Institutional Change in the Film Industry, 1978-2017*. He is embarking on a new project on the socio-technical analysis of safe driving and autonomous driving technologies, serving as the Director of the Research Institute of Automobile and Parts Industries (RIAPI), Waseda University.

### **Being Together at a Distance, Talking and Avoiding Talk: Making Sense of the Present on Victory Square in Tianjin**

Isabelle Thireau, EHES

This paper presents an ongoing research on a diversity of public gatherings observed in Tianjin municipality during the last years. After introducing how the concepts of « gathering » and « public » were defined to identify three different types of events located in the same district, Heping district (和平区), I will further describe and analyze one of these events. Since 1991, everyday at 7 pm, a few dozens of persons gather to perform various types of exercises on Shengli Guangchang (胜利广场). If such social activities are often witnessed in China and look similar to the outsider, they should actually be differentiated according to the ordering process and stabilization pattern that contribute to their making. More pointedly, this paper will first introduce the fixed time and space landmarks that, with repetition and routine, organize this gathering behind its apparent confusion. It will then proceed to explore the tension existing between the bonds coming from exercising or « making together » and the diversity of relationships, and more precisely the varying physical distance established between the participants, especially during sequences when talk is possible. Finally, we will explore how talk nonetheless occurs before, during and after the gathering ; how it concerns close events (the destruction of a neighboring building) as well as much more distant ones (Fukushima incident or

war in Lybia) and, more importantly, how by talking together, a sense of « what is » and « what is to be valued » outside this public square come to be better shared.

**Isabelle Thireau** is Professor of Sociology at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (Paris) and Research Director at the CNRS. Her interests include the sociology of norms, sense of justice and legitimacy in China, with fieldworks in Guangdong, Anhui, Beijing and Tianjin. Her most recent publications are *Les Ruses de la démocratie. Protester en Chine contemporaine* (in collaboration with Hua Linshan, Seuil, 2010); *De proche en proche. Ethnographie des formes d'association en Chine contemporaine* (Peter Lang, 2013); « Contesting illegitimate situations, reassessing shared norms in contemporary China », *European Journal of Social Sciences* (2014, 52-2, pp 133-161).

### **Literature, Cinema and Inter-Ethnic Publics in China**

Ying Qian, Columbia University

In recent years, increasing attention has been paid to ethnic minority literature and cinema in China, yet there has been a general tendency to treat minority cultural productions as separate from those of the Han-Chinese, confined in their own communities, thereby overlooking the constant circulations of ideas, texts and people across ethnic divides. This paper uses three case studies to explore how cultural productions by minority writers and artists circulate and generate inter-ethnic alliances and publics. I argue that in the Mao-era, while propaganda documentaries were used to consolidate ethnic classification and shape public opinion on ethnic difference, non-Han local elites managed to create hidden transcripts in these films, counter-acting standard narratives and creating alternative historiography to support counter-publics of memory. Moving to the contemporary period, I examine unofficial poetry journals in the Liangshan region in Sichuan, and village video projects in Yunnan, both concerted efforts to form inter-ethnic counter-publics, based on common experiences of migratory labor and environmental degradation. Thinking about public spheres in Mao-era and contemporary China as intriguing variations of what Negt and Kluge calls “public sphere of production,” I reflect on the political possibilities of these counter-publics in today’s China.

**Ying Qian** is an assistant professor at the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures at Columbia University, teaching courses on cinema, visual culture and critical media studies in China and East Asia. Her research interests include film and media theories and practices, documentary cinema in comparative perspectives, and global histories and imaginaries of revolution, socialism and postsocialism. She has published in various journals and edited volumes including *The New Left Review*, *China Perspectives*, and *Oxford Handbook of Chinese Cinemas*, and is completing a book manuscript entitled *Visionary Realities: Documentary Cinema in Revolutionary China*, which studies documentary aesthetics and epistemology in China’s 20th century, and uses documentary as a prism to investigate intertwined histories of media practice, industrial modernity and revolutionary politics. She serves as affiliated faculty at Columbia’s Institute of Comparative Literature and Society, and Center for Comparative Media. She received her doctorate from Harvard University. Besides academic research, she has been a filmmaker, critic and film programmer.

Chair:

**Nilüfer Göle** is Professor of Sociology at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) in Paris. She works on Islamic visibility, secularism and intercultural controversies in European public spheres. Her sociological approach aims to open up a new reading of modernity from a non-western perspective and a broader critique of Eurocentrism in the definitions of secular modernity. Her books have been published in many languages. She is the author of *The Daily Lives of Muslims. Islam and Public Confrontation in Contemporary Europe* (Zedbooks, London, 2017), *Islam and Secularity: The Future of Europe's Public Sphere* (Duke University Press, 2015), *Islam and Public Controversy in Europe* (Ashgate, 2014), *Interpénétrations, l'Islam et l'Europe* (Galaade, Paris, 2005) and *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling* (1997). She directed EuroPublicIslam, a research project on Islam's visibility and the transformations of European public sphere (2008-2013). Her current new program of research concerns Maidan protest movements and democracy in global era (EHESS, Nomis Foundation). She received the award "Ambassador of the New Europe" for her book *The Daily Lives of Muslims* (From ERC Project 2009/2013). The prize for the best book on Europe's future is given by European Solidarity Center in Gdansk, 25<sup>th</sup> of May 2017.

#### **Panel 4: Publicness and the state**

##### **The Un-public Sphere: Mediated Communication in Mao's China**

Nicolai Volland, Pennsylvania State University

In *Uncivil Society*, their revisionist history of the implosion of the Communist establishment in Eastern Europe in the 1980s, Stephen Kotkin and Jan Gross characterize as misguided attempts to detect a nascent civil society in the nations of the former East bloc, and to attribute the demise of these regimes to vigorous grassroots action. "Civil society in Eastern Europe did not ... actually exist" in 1989. "The mostly small groups of dissidents, however important morally, could not have constituted any kind of society" (2009, 7). Rather, it was what they call "uncivil society," the massive, entangled political establishment and its mismanagement of the economy, that brought about their own collapse. Taking a clue from Kotkin and Gross, this paper proposes the hypothetical notion of an "un-public sphere"—a sphere of mediated communication that is, for all practical purposes, an inversion of the Habermasian concept of the "public sphere." Rather than open, it is closed; rather than grassroots-driven it is directed by the establishment in a top-down manner; not governed by reason, but by ideological fiat and commands of loyalty; and, importantly, not a space of deliberation, but rather a means of education and indoctrination. This paper is a thought experiment, a provocation aimed to explore how our understanding of the public in Maoist China changes when it is viewed as "unpublic" rather than "public." Refocusing attention from marginal or heterodox groups to the establishment itself, I argue, does not necessarily resurrect the totalitarian model of the Party-state. I will tentatively suggest that shifting agency to the establishment (1) reveals the latter as amorphous, heterogeneous, and conflict-prone, rather than monolithic; (2) shows that competing communication prerogatives lead to erratic and irrational outcomes, including wild swings that constantly risk to discredit the system itself; (3) that the sphere's "unpublic" nature itself nurtures a very different set of

expectations among its users, be they elite or grassroots, and cultivates behavioral strategies that are not easily captured under a “public sphere” model. These propositions are tentative and will be subject to debate—both in terms of their ability to accurately describe the processes of mediated communication in the Mao era, and in their potential to further explain the ongoing contest over public space in the reform era.

**NICOLAI VOLLAND** is Assistant Professor of Asian Studies and Comparative Literature at the Pennsylvania State University. He is the author of *Socialist Cosmopolitanism: The Chinese Literary Universe, 1945-1965* (Columbia). He currently works on a study of the Chinese press in the Mao era and the CCP’s understanding of the press’s role and function within the socialist state.

### **Petitions and Big-Character-Posters: Bottom Up or Top Down?**

Denise Ho, Yale University

This presentation considers two forms of publicly disseminated texts in China’s Cultural Revolution: the petition and the big-character-poster. In the context of Mao-era mass politics, these kinds of documents were seen as grassroots, bottom-up statements to a wider public. Indeed, their mass nature was part of their legitimacy, whether the texts called for a denunciation, a revolutionary action, or a particular policy. Yet the conditions behind their creation reveal that petitions and big-character-posters were often the product of behind-the-scenes negotiation, as much top-down as bottom-up. Using two case studies—a petition calling for cultural preservation and the big-character-poster as suggested by class education exhibits—this presentation examines the “publicness” of such Cultural Revolution mass texts.

**Denise Y. Ho** is assistant professor of twentieth-century Chinese history at Yale University. She is an historian of modern China, with a particular focus on the social and cultural history of the Mao period (1949-1976). She is the author of *Curating Revolution: Politics on Display in Mao’s China* (2018). Using a wide variety of primary sources, including Shanghai’s municipal and district archives and oral history, *Curating Revolution* depicts displays of revolution and history, politics and class, and art and science. Analyzing China’s “socialist museums” and “new exhibitions,” Ho demonstrates how Mao-era exhibitionary culture both reflected and made revolution. Her articles and book chapters appear in *The China Quarterly*, *Frontiers of History in China*, *History Compass*, *Modern China*, *Red Legacies in China: The Afterlives of the Communist Revolution in Contemporary Chinese Culture and Society*, *The Oxford Handbook of History and Material Culture*, and *The Afterlives of Chinese Communism*. Denise Y. Ho received her B.A. in history from Yale College and an A.M. and Ph.D. in history from Harvard University. She is currently one of twenty-one fellows in the Public Intellectuals Program of the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations.

### **Underground Literature and Reading Groups in the 1970s**

Sebastian Veg, EHESS

Historians are currently reassessing the 1970s as a period of important bottom-up changes in Chinese society in the wake of Lin Biao's death. The decade is now increasingly envisaged in conjunction with the intellectual effervescence of the 1980s rather than exclusively as an extension of the political mobilizations of the 1960s.

Liu Qingfeng's early epistolary novel *Open Love Letters* was written in 1972, shortly after the death of Lin Biao, and circulated through unofficial channels in the late years of the Cultural Revolution. Its critique of psychological violence and ideology, its advocacy of science and the freedom of sentiments illustrate how daily life in a remote village could be discussed among young intellectuals under Mao, making the novel a unique early dissenting work of the Mao era. On a textual level, its critiques of the politicization of society and the pervasive social hierarchies in Mao's China lead the author to affirming sentiments and individuality as an alternative form of authenticity. As a social phenomenon, the novel's epistolary form advocated a form of publicness that was both inspired by and gave rise to social practices of letter writing, unofficial publishing, and reading groups that emerged among sent-down youths and other social groups in the 1970s. It was followed by a series of unofficial or underground publications spanning the period before and after Mao's death, the most famous of which was the poetry journal *Today (Jintian)*, which prepared the intellectual scene for the changes of the 1980s.

The present paper will attempt to assess the connection between the assertion of individuality through sentiment and the shared dimension of publicly circulated texts in the 1970s. While texts like *Open Love Letters* can be read as "hidden transcripts" defining alternative communities, it will be argued that they aimed to more deeply redefine the notion of publicness as it had come to be practiced under Mao.

**Sebastian Veg** is a Professor (directeur d'études) of intellectual history and literature of 20<sup>th</sup> century China at EHESS, Paris and an Honorary Professor at the University of Hong Kong. He was director of the French Centre for Research on Contemporary China (CEFC) in Hong Kong from 2011 to 2015. His interests are in 20<sup>th</sup> century Chinese intellectual history, literature, and political debates. His doctoral research was devoted to modernism and democracy in the May Fourth era (*Fictions du pouvoir chinois. Littérature, modernisme et démocratie au début du XXe siècle*, 2009), followed by a second project on the rise of grassroots intellectuals in China since the 1990s (*Among the Silent Majority: the Rise of China's Grassroots Intellectuals*, forthcoming, 2019). He was the co-principal investigator for a France-Hong Kong research grant on "New Approaches to the Mao Era: everyday history and popular memory." Most recently, he has published a series of articles on cultural and political debates in Hong Kong since the handover.

## **Society Must Be Defended: Chinese Spy Thrillers and the Enchantment of Arcana Imperii**

Haiyan Lee, Stanford University

Modern detective fiction flourished briefly in China in the first half of the 20th century. Once the Communist Party came to power in 1949, the genre was deemed a misfit and banned. The spy thriller, however, was given a space to thrive, contributing significantly to the small oeuvre of "red classics" as well as hand-copied underground novels during the socialist period. In the new millennium, the genre has undergone a renaissance and cornered a large share of the

entertainment market in the form of bestsellers, primetime television dramas, and blockbuster films. Detective fiction, by contrast, has returned but remained a marginal concern.

In this paper, I argue that the enduring salience of the spy thriller has everything to do with the Maoist ideology of “permanent revolution,” the national-security state that emerged out of socialist state-building and the geopolitics of the Cold War, and China’s recent bid for world power status. Espionage fiction posits a state perpetually at war with shadowy, conspiratorial internal and external enemies and showcases its corps of technocrats and secret agents defending the country through iron discipline, professional brilliance, Machiavellian intelligence, debonair panache, and self-abnegating patriotism. The genre enchants the state as an autonomous power replete with *arcana imperii*, and elevates the reason of state as the locus of the just and the sublime. It is the romance of the state par excellence.

By comparing Chinese spy thrillers to their Western counterparts (particularly the James Bond franchise), I reflect on the problem of freedom vis-à-vis the imperative of national security, I also raise questions about the moral status of secrecy, the cognitive-aesthetic appeal of duplicity and suspicion, the relationship between justice and loyalty, and the moral foundations of statism.

**Haiyan Lee** is a professor of Chinese and comparative literature at Stanford University. She is the author of *Revolution of the Heart: A Genealogy of Love in China, 1900-1950* (Stanford University Press, 2007), winner of the 2009 Joseph Levenson Prize (post-1900 China) from the Association for Asian Studies, and *The Stranger and the Chinese Moral Imagination* (Stanford University Press, 2014). In 2015-16, she was a Frederick Burkhardt Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences where she began research on a new project on Chinese visions of justice at the intersection of narrative, law, and ethics.

Chair:

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